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FM AMCONSUL KARACHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0608
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0076
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0182
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 2571
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 4454
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUFJACC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

S E C R E T KARACHI 000497

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/27/2023

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [ELTN](#) [ETRD](#) [PTER](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: SINDH - KARACHI TRANSPORTERS STRIKE EXPOSES VULNERABILITIES

REF: A. A: KARACHI 491
[¶](#)B. B: KARACHI 490

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY CONSUL GENERAL KAY ANSKE, REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

[¶](#)1. (S) Noor Khan Niazi, newly elected President of the Karachi Goods Transport Ittehad (KGTI), told EconOff on August 26 that his union had reached an agreement with the GOP and called off a long-haul truckers strike that had threatened to stall USG goods shipments to Afghanistan (reftel A). According to shipping company officials, the strike, which began on August 18, left 615 containers, eight humvees, and one large military transport sitting in Karachi's two ports, unable to move. The last shipment out to Afghanistan from Karachi went by rail on August 23. Theoretically, goods should begin to move again soon.

[¶](#)2. (S) The work stoppage underscored the dependence on domestic conditions in Pakistan of the supply lines from Karachi to the war effort in Afghanistan. Among the strikers' demands were relief from rising fuel and toll prices and reparations for damages incurred during the riots that occurred after the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on December 27, 2007.

[¶](#)3. (S) Shipments bound for Afghanistan, around a total of 700 containers a week, normally arrive at either Karachi Port or Port Qasim (a Karachi suburb) and are transferred via truck to either Bagram, Khandahar or Kabul in Afghanistan. When the strike began, one of three USG contract carriers, Maersk Sealand, began to use railways to transport shipments in lieu of trucks. However, this route became unavailable to the company on August 23 because other businesses had reserved all vacant space for their commercial shipments. Strikers reportedly threatened to burn trucks and kill drivers who attempted to break the picket lines.

[¶](#)4. (S) American President Lines (APL), the only USG contracted shipping company to operate out of Karachi Port, reported 425 containers, eight humvees and one large military transport vehicle stalled at the port. Maersk Sealand, which reported 187 stranded containers at Port Qasim, got word of the strike early and shipped all waiting stock out the day before the strike. Otherwise, the company would have had a larger backlog. Hapag Lloyd, the third USG contract carrier, noted three containers stalled at Port Qasim. On August 25, unknown assailants attacked two USG humvees, setting one on fire, that were loaded on a transport idled by the strike (reftel B).

[¶](#)5. (S) Comment: The long-haul truckers strike went on longer than originally anticipated by business leaders and

many complained about GOP lack of attention to the stoppage or efforts to resolve it. According to post sources, provincial authorities did not hear of the strike until the evening of the fourth day. The continuing instability of the GOP could hamper its ability to focus attention on serious domestic issues, such as the strike, leaving USG supply lines potentially vulnerable.

Anske